BHU MSC GEOPHYSICS TOUR 1966

Just a few months into our M.Sc. degree in geophysics we were offered the opportunity to go on a month long tour of southern India. It was an informal part of our program to introduce us with various institutions engaged in geophysical work in the country. For us geophysics was a new field and we knew very little about it. Among other objectives, the tour was designed to serve as an exposure to what sort of career we could hope for after graduation.

There were 15 of us in the group and a lot of planning went into the tour. Prof Randhir Singh was our tour guide. A detailed travel itinerary was set based on which the train tickets were booked for the students. The word 'round circular ticket' comes to mind. I understood that the Department submitted the planned itinerary to railways for obtaining concessional student tickets. I recall P. C. Verma coordinated with the railway divisional office in the ticket procurement.

Surely, the university provided support for the tour but we were asked to contribute as well. If my memory serves correctly, our contribution was around 500 rupees. This was a rather large sum. I made a visit to my father in Faizabad for the money and he graciously obliged.

It was an exciting opportunity and we were looking forward to the day of travel with great anticipation. On an October afternoon, we left Varanasi station traveling in unreserved third class. Our first stop was Hyderabad. It was a day long train journey with a change at Itarsi. Upon arrival in Hyderabad we checked in a *dharmshala* closer to the railway station (On our tour we stayed mostly in *dharmshalas*.). After refreshing and breakfast we headed to visit NGRI (National Geophysical Research Institute) and spent better part of the day there.

NGRI was an important institution with a large community of BHU seniors working as research scientists. We received a warm welcome upon arrival by the director Dr. Hari Narain. We were given tour of various facilities and research activities. At the time NGRI was located in G-type residential quarters of Regional Research Labs so the NGRI labs were functional but not impressive. It would take another five years for NGRI to get their own building. It happened so that 2 years later in October 1968, I joined NGRI and started my research career there.

The BHU community welcomed us like family. It is difficult to remember exactly who we met but the names that come to mind are S.K. Upadhyay, Tarkeshwar Lal and Ratan Lal Dhar. We did some sightseeing in Hyderabad. We visited the ruins of Golconda Fort, Salarjung museum, Charminar in addition to walking around the modern shopping areas of the city.

Hyderabad was a wonderful start of our tour setting us up with expectations of what lay ahead.
On this tour we visited many cities, Madras (Chennai), Madurai, Rameshwaram, Kodai Kanal, Ooty, Bangalore, Mysore, Trivandrum, Cape Comorin (Kanya Kumari), Cochin, Poona (Pune), Wasco Da Gama (Goa), Aurangabad and Bombay (Mumbai). Looking back, I realize that our tour was much more touristic than educational. We did visit a few institutions on the trip. In Madras, we visited Meenambakkam airport and observed weather radar as well as navigation radar. In Pune, we visited IMD (India Meteorological Department) where we were welcomed by 1964 graduate Jagdish Shukla. There we also visited CWPRS (Central Water and Power Research Station). In Cochin we visited some lab but I cannot recall its name. In Goa we visited National Institute of Oceanography. In Trivandrum we visited Thumba rocket launching station. In Bombay, we visited Colaba Observatory where we saw a recording seismograph using optical recording.

Bombay was our last stop before we returned home. It was a dream city for me with images that I had woven in mind from watching films. It felt great to be in the ritzy city and experience the fancy financial district, marine drive, the beach, etc. I realized that there was not much money left by the time I reached Bombay. I, however, did manage a bit of shopping and had a meal in a restaurant that I thought was fancy.

There are a few things that still remain fresh in mind. On our first morning in Hyderabad, Lalit Dada and I were the first to take bath in the open courtyard. I witnessed a unique Banarasi style of Lalit Da. He started washing the leading edge of his dhoti and working backward. He was applying soap on wet dhoti on the floor as long as he could. He then applied soap to the other end while wearing the dhoti as well as to his entire body. I thought it was a good example of multi-tasking.

An anecdote that many colleagues would remember occurred in Madurai. After having traveled for a couple of weeks eating south Indian food, primarily rice, we were yearning for north Indian style food. In Madurai, we found a *Marvadi Dhaba* that served delicious, wholesome vegetarian meal with mini-chapatis with ghee. It was a treat and we all enjoyed our lunch. A few of us got in a spirit of competition and over indulged that did not go unnoticed. The indulgent colleagues returned to the *dhaba* for their evening meal but the manager politely refused serving with an excuse that they were closed.

On our way to Madras, the train stopped at some station where samosas were being sold. We were excited to treat ourselves with hot samosas. Of course, it was not Banarasi samosa and tasted differently. Someone said that it contained meat. The idea of having consumed meat did not set well with Vimala (Swami). He became nauseated and then vomited. My recollection is that samosas did not contain any meat. Someone seems to have played a prank knowing Swami was a strict vegetarian.

A somewhat embarrassing situation arose in Madras when we were traveling in a local train to go to Marina Beach. A couple of friends felt the need to use toilet but there weren't any on the train. Srinivas jumped out promptly as soon as the train stopped at a station and relieved himself on the tracks. Another friend with a similar urge was slightly delayed in jumping down. When he had partially emptied himself the train started to move and accelerate. None of us had the experience of traveling in such a fast accelerating local train before. He quickly ran to get back on the train with half-finished job and had to be pulled in. There could have been a serious accident. When he came on board it was noticed that his pants were slightly wet. The train was crowded and not many noticed it.

Traveling back from Rameshwaram we boarded the train in dark hours of early morning. Our compartments was empty and each one of us gladly stretched on a berth. We fell asleep not noticing when the train had started to move. Around day break when the train reached Pambhan, a huge crowd of passengers filled the compartment. They forced us to sit up so they could be seated. We did not like this and an argument ensued between them and us. They talked in Tamil and we talked in Hindi. Out of frustration one of us used a Banarasi *gaal* .(a swear word). Unbelievably, one of them understood it and the temperature of arguments suddenly shot up. By this time the train was traveling over the Pambhan bridge. They were so enraged that they threatened to throw us in the sea. Somehow the unpleasant situation was diffused and we continued our journey.

Another incident that many of us would remember occurred while traveling to Goa. Vimla was lying on the upper berth in the train and was fiddling with the emergency stop chain with his foot. Somehow he managed to pull the chain and the train stopped. We did receive a visit from the guard and the situation was diffused.

We traveled as a group in close proximity of each other for a month. We did poke fun at each other to get laughs but the limits were never crossed. In general, there was much laughter and fun in our group. It is remarkable that no disagreement or discord ever took place between us in the entire tour. Looking back, I can say that ours was a cohesive group where friendships took the front seat.

Almost six decades have passed and I remember our tour with great fondness. Personally, it was a very enriching experience. Having lived in U.P., I had very little idea about other parts of the country. The tour exposed me to people, culture, food, etc. of south India. Above all, I realized the beauty of our country. It made me feel then we were blessed to belong to a country where we had everything. The single most achievement for me was to deepen my friendships with my classmates. We have carried forward our friendship and remain connected today.

I would like to wrap up this fragmented memory by a few pictures that I had taken on the trip. We were issued cameras from the department by Mr. Mehta that used 120-size film. Unfortunately, the camera I had was not very good and my pictures were mostly out of focus. My consolation is that I have at least a photo record. The photos are presented without any apologies!

Waris Ejaz Khan Warsi
Houston, Texas
17 July 2025

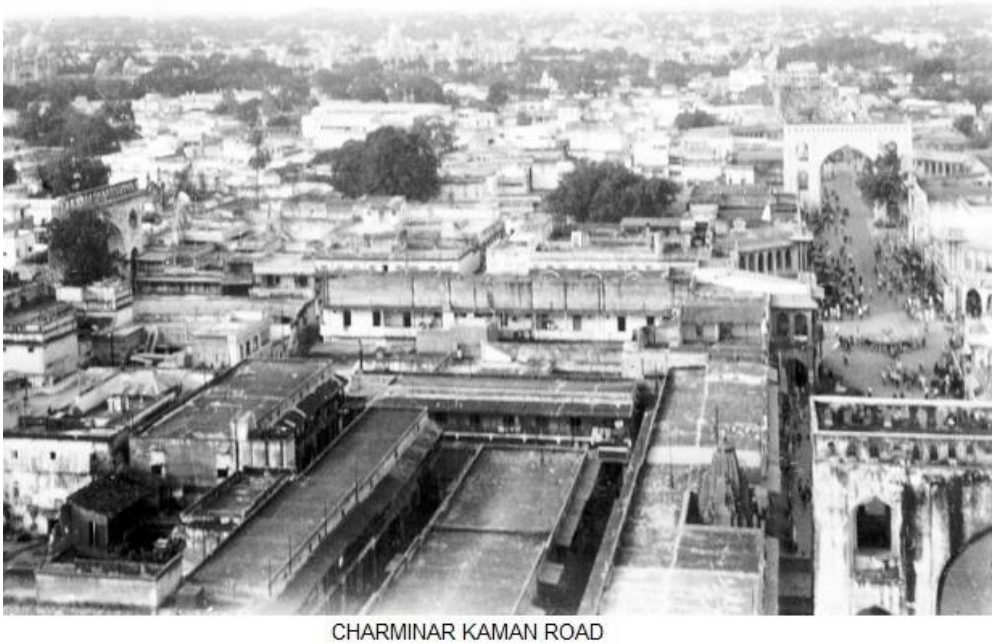
PS. I must acknowledge contributions of my colleagues who helped with additional information and provided confirmation to incidents reported here.

PHOTOGRAPHS

NGRI, HYDERABAD - October 1966: L to R (Sitting) B.R. Arora, Srinivas Pandey, Prof. R.D. Singh, R.P. Singh, V.P. Singh (Standing) R.L. Sharma, C.M. Nautiyal, M.S. Bhalla, B. Bhattacharya, P.C. Verma, Vijay Singh, W.E.K. Warsi, S.M. Pandey, M.P. Singh, J.B. Srivastava

NGRI, HYDERABAD October 1966: L to R (Sitting) R.L. Dhar, R.N. Singh. V.P. Singh, W.E.K. Warsi, M.S. Bhalla, R.P. Singh, P.C. Verma, Lalit Kumar, B.R. Arora
(Standing) Unknown, Dr. M.S. Bhalla, M.P. Singh, Prof. R.D. Singh, C.M. Nautiyal, J.B. Srivastava, Srinivas Pandey, Dr. Hari Narain, Dr. Amlendu Roy, Vijay Singh

CHARMINAR

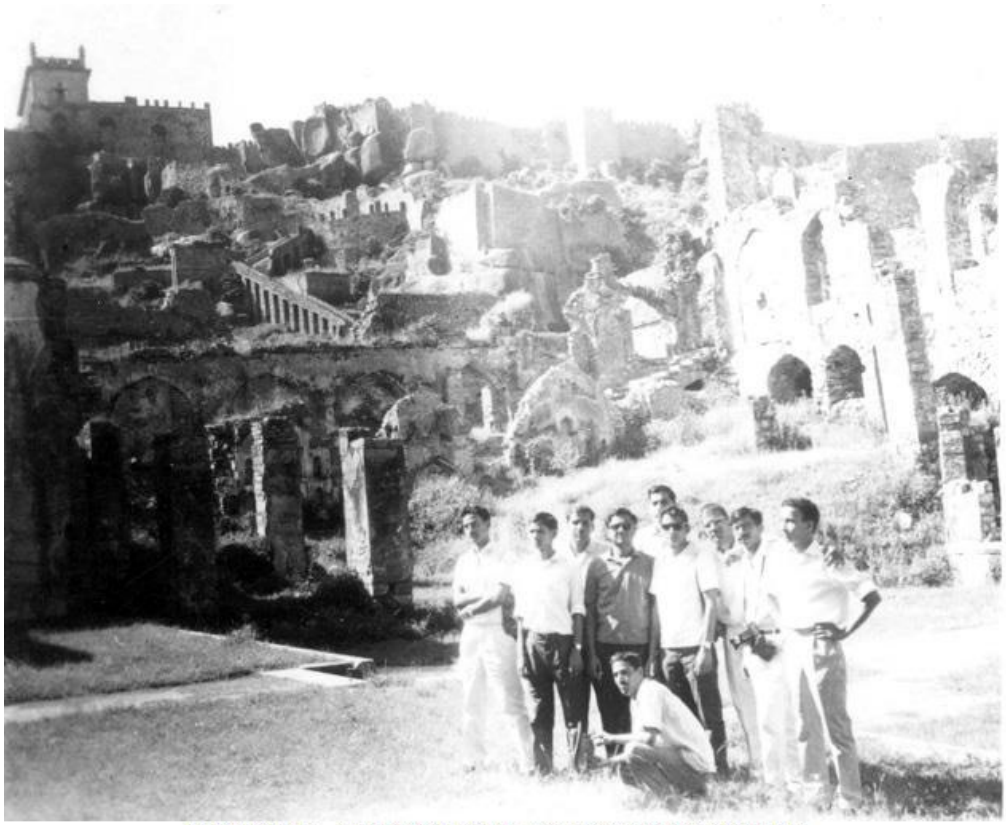


CHARMINAR KAMAN ROAD

CHARMINAR : L to R Lalit Kumar, P>C. Verma, S.M. Pandey, B. Bhattacharya, V.K. Painuly

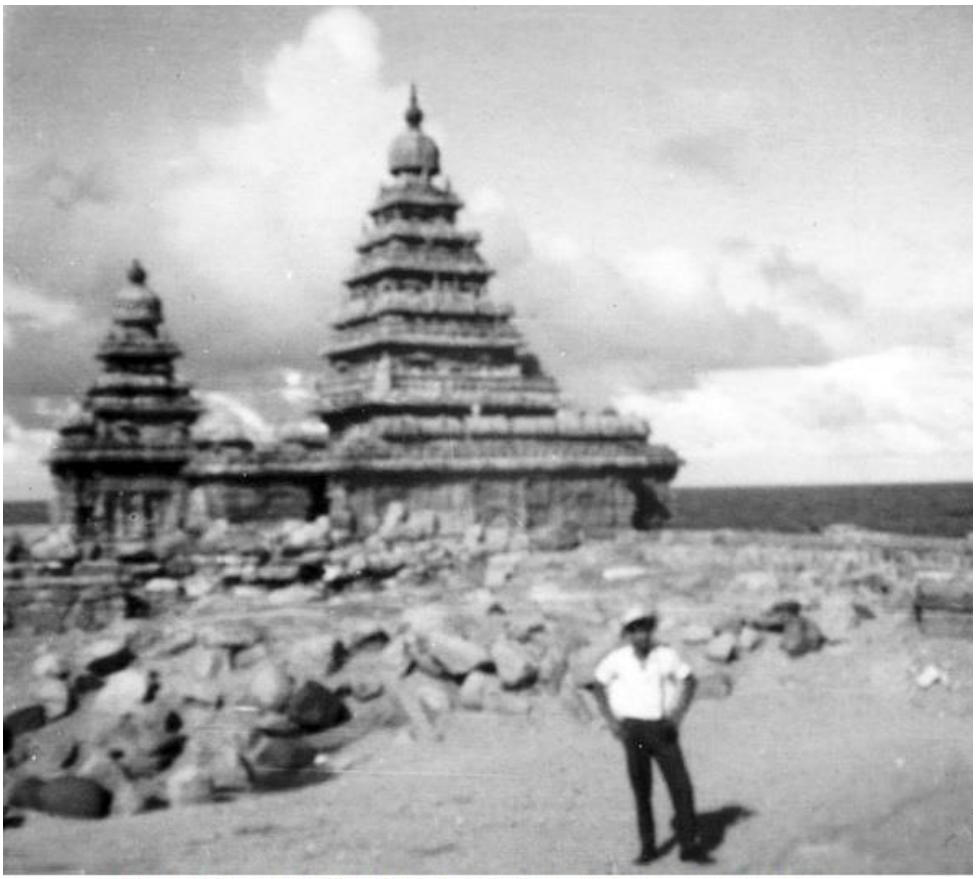
OSMANIA UNIVERITY - ARTS COLLEGE: L to R W.E.K. Warsi, V.K. Painuly, Lalit Kumar

OSMANIA UNIVERSITY - ARTS COLLEGE: L to R B. Bhattacharya, V.K. Painuly, Lalit Kumar



HYDERABAD - GOLCONDA FORT: Our group with S.K. Upadhyay

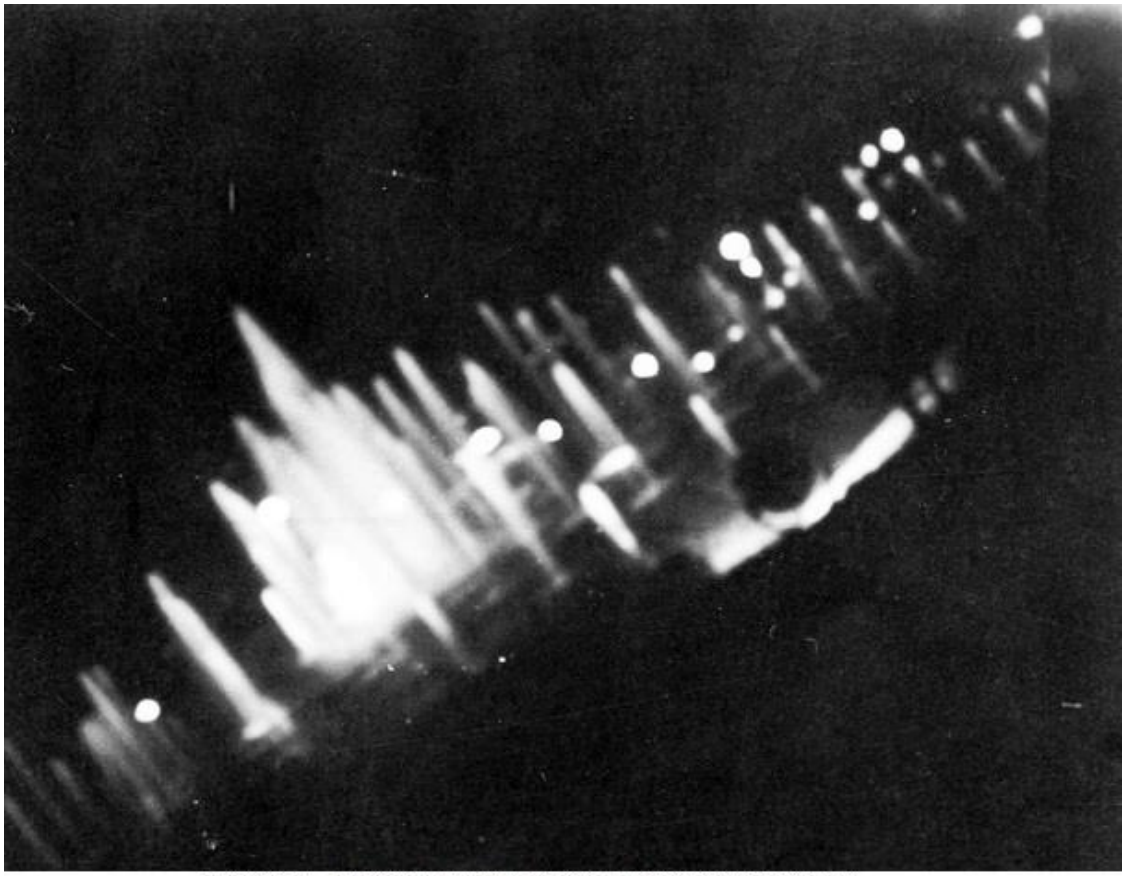
HYDERABAD - GOLCONDA FORT: Our group with S.K. Upadhyay



MAHABALIPURAM TEMPLE BY THE SEA : B. Bhattacharya in foreground

A MONUMENT IN THE MAHABALIPURAM TEMPLE COMPLEX

A LIGHTHOUSE NEAR MAHABALIPURAM : L to R. M.P. Singh. V.P. Singh, R.P. Singh, W.E.K. Warsi, Lalit Kumar, V.K. Painuly



MYSORE - BRINDAVAN GARDENS FOUNTAINS AT NIGHT

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POSSIBLY BANGALORE

BOMBAY - GATEWAY OF INDIA

BOMBAY - TAJ MAHAL HOTEL

BOMBAY - Enjoying sunset on the beach

…… AND THUS ENDED A WONDERFUL TRIP!